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Letter dated 18 March 2013 from the Permanent Representative of Turkey to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit herewith a letter dated 18 March 2013 addressed to you from Mr. Mehmet Dânâ, Representative of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (see annex).

I would be grateful if the text of the present letter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 43, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Y. Halit **Çevik**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

13-26564 (E) 250313

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Annex to the letter dated 18 March 2013 from the Permanent Representative of Turkey to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Upon instructions from my Government, I am writing in order to set the record straight in relation to the allegations contained in the statement made by the Greek Cypriot Representative on 12 December 2012 during the fifty-third plenary meeting of the General Assembly, which was held under agenda item 10, entitled "Return or restitution of cultural property to the countries of origin".

Throughout the many years following the Greek Cypriot destruction in 1963 of the 1960 Partnership Republic of Cyprus, the Greek Cypriot side has managed to misinform the international community and portray the Cyprus problem as one of "invasion" and "occupation", while disguising the suffering and unjust isolation inflicted on the Turkish Cypriot people. You are no doubt well aware that, as one of the guarantors in Cyprus under the 1960 International Treaties, Turkey intervened in 1974 in order to save the Turkish Cypriots from total annihilation following the coup engineered by Greece and its Greek Cypriot collaborators in Cyprus to realize *enosis* (annexation of the island to Greece). In fact, none of the Security Council resolutions on Cyprus describe the legitimate and justified Turkish intervention of 1974, undertaken in accordance with the 1960 Treaty of Guarantee, as "invasion" or the subsequent presence of Turkish troops on the island as "occupation". Such distortions are purely a Greek Cypriot forgery aimed at blurring the issue and confusing the innocent with the guilty. On this point, it is imperative to recall the dramatic statement made by Archbishop Makarios, the Greek Cypriot leader at the time, to the Security Council on 19 July 1974, in which he openly accused Greece, not Turkey, of invading and occupying Cyprus. His remarks, which came only four days after the Greek Cypriot coup of 15 July 1974, are well recorded in the annals of the United Nations and hardly require further elaboration.

With regard to the allegations in relation to the so-called destruction of cultural heritage in Northern Cyprus, I would like to emphasize that protection of the island's cultural heritage is of great importance to the Turkish Cypriot side, since the cultural heritage of Cyprus, whether in the North or in the South, emanates from the diverse and rich cultures and civilizations that have populated the island throughout history and is the common heritage of humanity regardless of its origin, and as such should be protected and preserved.

Despite the unabating and often successful attempts of the Greek Cypriot administration to block initiatives of the Turkish Cypriot authorities to receive funds and technical support from relevant international institutions and third parties for the protection of cultural heritage in Northern Cyprus, since 2006 15 Greek Orthodox churches have been restored by our authorities and other projects for the restoration of churches, mosques, monasteries and other monuments have been undertaken in collaboration with the Partnership for the Future of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the UNDP Action for Cooperation and Trust. Restoration works on some other churches and monasteries are currently under way, with the support of the UNDP Action for Cooperation and Trust and the Government of the United States of America. In the past few years alone, around $400,000 have been spent by the authorities of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus on cultural heritage restoration projects, in addition to the funds made

available by the European Union and the United States Agency for International Development.

It is also worth mentioning at this point that the 21 March 2008 agreement reached between the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot sides has paved the way for the establishment of the Technical Committee on Cultural Heritage, among other committees, which has given an important impetus for the protection of the rich and varied cultural heritage of the island. In line with the mandate given to it, the Technical Committee has held numerous meetings since 2008 and made almost 300 on-site visits to the cultural heritage monuments on both sides of the island.

The Committee announced on 21 February 2012 that the restoration of the Monastery of Apostolos Andreas in Northern Cyprus would be undertaken by the Committee in line with the framework of its modalities and in accordance with the study prepared by the University of Patras in Greece. This is a very positive development, particularly in view of the fact that for many years it has not been possible to start restoration of the monastery owing to the impediments created by the Greek Cypriot side and the Greek Orthodox Church. Unfortunately, the restoration project could still not start, even after said decision of the Committee, as the Greek Orthodox Church has continued to create obstacles, despite the joint will of both sides expressed through the Committee. During the course of this process, the Archbishop of the Greek Orthodox Church went so far as to declare that he would prefer the monastery to collapse rather than to see it restored by Turkish Cypriots. With a view to clearing the way for the commencement of the restoration work, the Turkish Cypriot side took a new approach and announced on 8 January 2013 that the Turkish Cypriot authorities were ready to provide the funding for the project. Indeed, this initiative yielded immediate results and, shortly after this announcement, it was declared in a joint statement of the Technical Committee and the UNDP Partnership for the Future dated 31 January 2013 that a multi-donor partnership agreement for the restoration of the Monastery of Apostolos Andreas had been signed with the Greek Orthodox Church and the Turkish Cypriot Evkaf administration, marking "an important milestone in the collaboration between the Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots for the preservation of their cultural heritage".

The constructive and positive approach adopted by the Turkish Cypriot side for the restoration of the monastery is yet another indication of our sincerity and good will for the protection of cultural heritage on the island regardless of its origin. On the other hand, while claiming to care very much for the protection and preservation of the cultural heritage of the island, the Greek Cypriot administration continues to show utter contempt for the Turkish-Muslim heritage in Southern Cyprus, where cultural and religious monuments, including mosques, baths, fountains and cemeteries, are under threat of destruction. It should be underlined, in this context, that hundreds of Turkish Cypriot villages, together with their mosques, have been razed to the ground since 1963.

Furthermore, the Greek Cypriot leadership continues to hinder the access of Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus citizens to religious worship places, primarily to the Hala Sultan Mosque, condones the systematic destruction of Turkish-Muslim heritage in the South and takes no concrete measures against the rise of racism. Mosques located in Southern Cyprus have also frequently been the target of arson attacks (the most recent examples of such attacks were the ones perpetrated against Köprülü Cami on 13 April 2012 and Denya Cami on 19 January 2013).

The Turkish Cypriot side is committed to doing its utmost to ensure that the cultural heritage of the island is preserved and protected. In doing so, we shall continue to encourage the Greek Cypriot side and the international community to cooperate with us towards this end. We firmly believe that this is our joint responsibility towards humanity and to future generations.

(*Signed*) Mehmet **Dânâ**
Representative
Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus